

Message Text

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SUBJ: SIAD BARRE'S VIABILITY

1. IN SPITE OF THE MILITARY CRISIS IN THE OGADEN, I DO NOT THINK THAT A CHANGE IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SOMALI DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC IS IMMINENT, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE A NUMBER OF SCENARIOS WHICH COULD POSSIBLY BRING IT ABOUT. SIAD'S STRENGTH IS HIS ESTABLISHED POWER BASE WITHIN THE ARMY, A PERVASIVE SECURITY APPARATUS, AND A PARALLEL INFORMATION NETWORK WITHIN HIS OWN MAREHAN CLAN. HE HAS IF ANYTHING GAINED IN POPULARITY AND STRENGTH AS A RESULT OF HIS SUPPORT FOR THE "LIBERATION" OF THE OGADEN. YEARS IN POWER HAVE ENABLED HIM TO REDUCE THE ABILITY OF ANY OPPOSITION TO BAND TOGETHER AND PLOT AGAINST HIM.

2. THERE IS DOUBTLESS A PRO-SOVIET CLIQUE, ALTHOUGH I CANNOT IDENTIFY ITS LEADERS, MUCH LESS ITS SUPPORTERS. CAPITAL GOSSIP INVARIABLY CITES VICE PRESIDENT AND DEFENSE MINISTER MOHAMED ALI SAMANTAR AND FINANCE MINISTER MOHAMED YUSUF WEIRAH AS THE LEADERS OF THIS GROUP, BUT I AM INCLINED TO DISAGREE. SIAD IS TOO CLEVER A MANIPULATOR TO ASSIGN A POTENTIAL RIVAL TO A POSITION FROM WHICH A COUP MIGHT BE STAGED WITHOUT KEEPING A CLOSE WATCH ON HIM. IDEOLOGIST MOHAMED ADEN, WHO HAS CONTACTS WITH THE PCI, IS ALSO DES-
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CRIBED AS PRO-SOVIET, BUT I SEE NEITHER WEIRAH OR MOHAMED ADEN AS POTENTIAL FRONT RUNNERS IN A LEADERSHIP CONTEST.

3. THERE IS A MORE NATIONALISTIC BUT NOT NECESSARILY MORE PRO-WESTERN GROUP AT THE OTHER END OF THE SPECTRUM. MINERALS MINISTER HUSSEIN ABDULKADIR KASSIM IS CERTAINLY A MEMBER, AS IS VICE PRESIDENT ISMAEL ALI ABOCAR. NSS CHIEF BRIG.

GAN. AHMED SULEIMAN ABDULLAH IS ALSO OFTEN CITED AS A MEMBER. I DO NOT SEE THAT MUCH OF A THREAT COMING FROM THIS GROUP, HOWEVER, WHICH TENDS TO ALIGN ITSELF WITH SIAD'S MOST LOYAL SUPPORTERS, VICE PRESIDENT HUSSEIN KULMIE AFRAH AND AGRICULTURE MINISTER MOHAMED IBRAHIM.

4. FORMER SOMALI LEADERS HAVE IN MY VIEW LITTLE CHANCE OF MAKING A COMEBACK. THE FORMER PRIME MINISTERS ABDIRAZAK HAGI HUSSEIN AND MOHAMED IBRAHIM EGAL HAVE FOR TOO LONG BEEN EITHER REASONABLY COMPLIANT SERVANTS OR PRISONERS OF THE GSDR. IF THERE ARE EFFECTIVE EMIGRE LEADERS IN ROME FOR EXAMPLE, OR ELSEWHERE, THEY ARE UNKNOWN TO THE EMBASSY, AND I CANNOT ESTIMATE THE THREAT SUCH MAY POSE TO SIAD. SO LONG AS HE ENJOYS THE SUPPORT OF THE POLICE AND THE ARMY, HOWEVER, I REGARD SUCH CHALLENGES AS MINIMAL. I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT SIAD WOULD STEP DOWN VOLUNTARILY; IT IS NOT IN CHARACTER. RECENT EVENTS HAVE BEEN A STRAIN ON HIS HEALTH, BUT I HAVE NO INSIGHTS OF THE DEGREE TO WHICH HE MAY HAVE SUFFERED, OR THE DEGREE TO WHICH LONG HOURS AND HEAVY SMOKING MAY HAVE TAKEN THEIR TOLL. WERE ILL-HEALTH TO FORCE SIAD OUT, OR AN UNEXPECTED RESIGNATION TO MATERIALIZE IN SPITE OF MY PREDICTION TO THE CONTRARY, I WOULD EXPECT TO SEE SOME FORM OF COLLEGIAL GOVERNMENT DRAWING ON SENIOR MILITARY AND PARTY OFFICIALS.

5. A SITUATION IN WHICH A DECISIVE MILITARY DEFEAT CAUSES
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SOME SECTION OF THE ARMY TO TURN AGAINST SIAD WITH SUFFICIENT MOTIVATION, ORGANIZATION, AND WILLINGNESS TO MOVE IS DIFFICULT TO HYPOTHEZIZE. IN THIS CASE, IT IS NOT SO MUCH A QUESTION OF WHO CONTROLS THE MOST BATTALIONS, BUT RATHER WHO WOULD HAVE THE INITIATIVE AND WILL TO STRIKE AND WHERE THAT STRIKING POWER MIGHT BE. WE HAVE REPORTS THAT SIAD KEEPS LOYAL MAREHAN PRAETORIANS CLOSE TO THE CAPITAL. LOGIC SUGGESTS THAT THE SOVIETS RECRUITED MILITARY OFFICERS FROM THOSE THEY TRAINED OVER THE YEARS, AND WHO MIGHT BE WILLING TO MOVE ON SOVIET INSTRUCTIONS AND WITH SOVIET BACKING. NATURALLY, I HAVE NO SOLID INDICATIONS THAT SUCH A MOVE IS BEING PLANNED NOR WOULD I EXPECT TO HAVE ANY. A COUP BY AN ANTI-MAREHAN OFFICERS' GROUP WOULD ALSO BE A POSSIBILITY UNDER THIS SCENARIO.

6. IT IS REALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT WITH ANY ACCURACY

WHAT POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE GSDR WOULD MEAN IN TERMS OF RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES OR A SETTLEMENT OF THE WAR. IF A PRO-SOVIET FACTION CAME TO POWER, I CAN ONLY HYPOTHESIZE IT WOULD BE RAPIDLY ANTI-AMERICAN, CITE US MACHINATIONS AS THE CAUSE OF THE OGADEN WAR, AND BE AMENABLE TO A SOVIET

IMPOSED SOLUTION. THIS WOULD, HOWEVER, BE SUCH A BITTER
PILL FOR SOMALI PRODE, THAT FRANKLY, IT BOGGLES THE MIND.
WERE A MORE NATIONALIST GROUP TO UNSEAT SIAD, I DON'T
BELIEVE THEY WOULD FOLLOW A VERY DIFFERENT POLICY THAN THE
GSDR NOW PURSUES. I DOUBT EITHER THE WEST OR THE MODERATE
ARABS COULD DECISIVELY SWAY SUCH A NEW GOVERNMENT BY THE
PROMISE OF EVEN EXTRAORDINARY ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, ALTHOUGH
INDUCEMENTS WHICH COULD PROMISE DRAMATIC MATERIAL IMPROVE-
MENT WOULD BE WELCOME. ALL OF THE FOREGOING IS PURE SPEC-
ULATION AND CONSEQUENTLY UNSATISFACTORY. I HAVE NEVER
ENCOUNTERED A SOMALI WHO DOES NOT BELIEVE THE FIGHT FOR
SELF DETERMINATION AND SOMALI RIGHTS IN THE OGADEN IS AN
UNJUST CAUSE, AND WHO WILL NOT ASSERT THAT THE STRUGGLE
OF SELF DETERMINATION MUST CONTINUE IN SOME FORM. I SUS-
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PECT THAT VIEW WOULD PREDOMINATE IN ANY POTENTIAL SOMALI
GOVERNMENT, NO MATTER WHAT TEMPORARY REVERSES IT MIGHT
RELUCTANTLY ACCEPT.

7. BY COINCIDENCE MY BRITISH COLLEAGUE AND I DISCUSSED THE
VIABILITY OF SIAD'S REGIME JUST TWO EVENINGS AGO. HE IS IN
COMPLETE AGREEMENT THAT THERE ARE NO SERIOUS CHALLENGERS
TO SIAD IN SIGHT. HE DOES NOT FORESEE A CHANGE IN THIS
GOVERNMENT. I DO NOT BELIEVE ANY OF THE ARAB MISSIONS HERE
HAVE ANY BETTER INSIGHTS THAN WE DO. MOST OF THESE
MISSIONS ARE TINY, AND FEW STAFFED BY ANY WHO COULD BE CALLED
SEERS. I SHALL SEEK AN EARLY OCCASION TO REVIEW THE SITUA-
TION WITH MY ITALIAN COLLEAGUE WHOSE EMBASSY STILL ENJOYS
WIDE CONTACTS HERE AND THROUGH MOFA ROME.

8. I SHOULD ADD THAT THE QUESTIONS IN REFTEL ARE EXCELLENT.
WE HAVE OFTEN DISCUSSED SIMILAR FORMULATIONS WITHIN THE
EMBASSY HERE, AND HOPED WE WOULD BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO
ADDRESS THEM AT THIS CRITICAL TIME. WE HAVE, HOWEVER, ONLY
BEEN OPERATING AS A NORMAL MISSION SINCE NOVEMBER, AND WHILE
THE CHANNELS OPENED TO US HAVE REPRESENTED AN IMPROVEMENT,
THE GSDR DID NOT SUDDENLY BECOME AN OPEN SOCIETY FOUR
MONTHS AGO. NO SECRETS ARE MORE ZEALOUSLY GUARDED THAN THE
MATTERS OF SUCCESSION OR STABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT.
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